

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 03216 01 OF 02 260600Z

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3125

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 3216

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SN, MY

SUBJ: VISIT OF U.S. TEAM TO DISCUSS COUNTERINSURGENCY EQUIP-
MENT AND TRAINING

1. THE INTERDEPARTMENTAL TEAM HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SINGAPORE (GOS) FROM THE MORNING OF JULY 24 TO MID-DAY JULY 25. THE FIRST DAY WAS DEVOTED TO BRIEFINGS BY THE GOS WHICH PROVIDED A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYSIA (CPM) INSURGENCY FROM 1930 TO THE PRESENT, AN ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT THE CPM POSES TO MALAYSIA AND CONSEQUENTLY TO SINGAPORE, INSIGHT INTO THE CURRENT STATUS OF CPM ACTIVITIES IN SINGAPORE, A DESCRIPTION OF THE SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES ORDER OF BATTLE AS OF JUNE 25, AND A REVIEW OF TRAINING AND FINANCE MATTERS RELATING TO DEFENSE SPENDING. THE BRIEFINGS WERE PARTICULARLY CANDID AND MINSED NO WORDS IN CRITICIZING MALAYSIAN RACIAL POLICIES WHICH THE GOS FEELS ARE WEAKENING THE ABILITY OF MALAYSIA TO DEAL WITH THE INSURGENT THREAT. COORDINATOR OF GOS BRIEFING, S.R. NATHAN, DIRECTOR OF SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE DIVISION, MINDEF, SAID GOS HAD NEVER BEFORE BEEN AS CANDID IN BRIEFING A FOREIGN DELEGATION ON THE SECURITY PICTURE IN MALAYSIA, AND REQUESTED THAT THE ENTIRE PRESENTATION BE CLOSELY HELD.

2. SINGAPOREANS THEN WENT ON TO DESCRIBE GOS TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT NEEDS IN DEALING WITH WHAT THEY PERCEIVED TO BE THE FUTURE THREAT:

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PAGE 02 SINGAP 03216 01 OF 02 260600Z

A. THE SINGAPOREANS PLAN TO DEVELOP A COUNTER-INSURGENCY JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL IN BRUNEI AND WILL SEEK AGREEMENT FROM THE UK AND THE SULTAN OF BRUNEI TO ESTABLISH SUCH A SCHOOL. THEY HOPE TO STAFF THE SCHOOL WITH INSTRUCTORS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM AND NEW ZEALAND. GOS DID NOT REQUEST ANY SPECIFIC ASSISTANCE FROM US BUT SOLICITED TEAM'S COMMENTS ON THE POLITICAL ADVISABILITY OF PROCEEDING WITH SUCH A PROPOSAL.

B. THE GOS THEN PROPOSED THAT 15 - 20 REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE ARMED FORCES, POLICE AND INTERNAL SECURITY DIVISION (ISD) BE SENT TO THE UNITED STATES TO ATTEND SEMINAR DISCUSSIONS WITH AMERICAN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTER INSURGENCY EXPERTS WHO COULD PROVIDE INSIGHT DRAWN FROM COUNTER INSURGENCY LESSONS LEARNED FROM UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS.

C. THE GOS PRESENTED THE TEAM WITH THE FOLLOWING LIST OF REQUIRED MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH INCLUDED 6 SA61 SIKORSKY HELICOPTERS, 4 C-130 AIRCRAFT, 75 APC'S, 60 105 HOWITZERS AND 10 RIVERINE CRAFT. THE US SIDE, AFTER REVIEWING THE ABOVE GOS EQUIPMENT NEEDS, REQUESTED THAT THE GOS ARRANGE THEIR EQUIPMENT ITEMS IN ORDER OF PRIORITY FOR DISCUSSION THE FOLLOWING DAY.

3. DIALOGUE ON THE 25TH FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL. THE TEAM COMMENTED THAT SINCE PROPOSED SCHOOL INVOLVED PRIMARILY UK AND BRUNEI, AND POSSIBLY CONSIDERATION OF MALAYSIAN AND INDONESIAN REACTIONS, US COULD NOT PROPERLY TAKE ANY POSITION. HOWEVER, US COULD UNDERSTAND WHY GOS CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH SUCH A SCHOOL SOMEWHERE.

B. SEMINAR. TEAM AGREED THAT THE US WOULD DRAW UP SEMINAR PROGRAM OR SYLLABUS WHICH WOULD PROVIDE THE TYPE OF INSTRUCTION THE SINGAPOREANS WANTED FOR THE 15 - 20 OFFICERS FROM THE ARMED FORCES, POLICE AND INTERNAL SECURITY DIVISION (ISD). THE SINGAPOREANS WERE TOLD THAT THERE MAY BE SOME DIFFICULTIES INVOLVING POLICE ATTENDANCE, BUT THAT THIS MATTER WOULD BE STUDIED AND A DETAILED RESPONSE WOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE GOS

SECRET

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PAGE 03 SINGAP 03216 01 OF 02 260600Z

AFTER THE TEAM HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH WASHINGTON. TEAM NOTED AND GOS AGREED THAT SUCH TRAINING WOULD BE OVERT AND SPONSORED BY THE DOD AND WOULD INCLUDE PARTICIPATION BY APPROPRIATE US GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

C. EQUIPMENT. THE GOS PRESENTED ITS LIST OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN ORDER OF PRIORITY. THE LIST AND US TEAM COMMENTS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

(1) HELICOPTERS. THE SINGAPOREANS REQUESTED 6 SA-61 SIKORSKY HELICOPTERS. THE US SIDE DESCRIBED THE CAPABILITY AND VERSATILITY OF BOTH THE SIKORSKY AND THE UH-1H HELICOPTERS, AND GOS REQUESTED TEAM'S REVIEW IN WASHINGTON OF ALTERNATIVE COSTS, CHARACTERISTICS AND CAPABILITIES OF BOTH ITEMS.

(2) C-130'S. THE SECOND PRIORITY WAS ACQUISITION OF 4 C-130'S TO FACILITATE TROOP AND LOGISTICS LIFT TO FOREIGN TRAINING SITES AND TO PROVIDE A SEA RECONNAISSANCE CAPABILITY (GOS NOTED THAT HELICOPTERS AND C-130'S GIVEN TOP PRIORITY BECAUSE THEY WERE ESSENTIAL FOR JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL WHICH GOS ANXIOUS TO PUT IN OPERATION WITHIN 18 MONTHS). THE TEAM RESPONDED THAT IN VIEW OF COMPETING DEMANDS IT COULD NOT BE OPTIMISTIC THAT ANY EXCESS C-130'S COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HOWEVER, TEAM RECOGNIZED THE SOUND RATIONALE FOR THIS ACQUISITION.

(3) APC'S. THE GOS WANTS TO ACQUIRE 35 APC'S AT THE END OF 36 MONTHS, AND AN ADDITIONAL 40 VEHICLES AT A LATER DATE.

(4) 105 HOWITZERS. THE GOS WANTS TO ACQUIRE 18 105 HOWITZERS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE AND AN ADDITIONAL 42 SHORTLY THEREAFTER. THE TEAM STATED THERE WERE MANY COMPETING DEMANDS FOR THIS ITEM AND THAT IT WOULD BE UNLIKELY THAT 105 HOWITZERS WOULD BE AVAILABLE IN ANY QUANTITY PRIOR TO THE END OF FY '79.

(5) RIVERINE CRAFT. THE SINGAPOREANS WANT TO OBTAIN WITHIN 18 MONTHS 10 MINI ARMORED TROOP CARRIERS (ATC'S) FOR USE IN RIVERINE WARFARE. THE SINGAPOREANS WERE ASKED TO CONSIDER A SUBSTITUTE CRAFT WHILE THE US TEAM WOULD LOOK INTO AVAILABILITY OF BOTH MINI ATC'S AND ALTERNATIVE SUITABLE TYPE OF CRAFT.

4. TEAM EXPLAINED FUNDAMENTALS OF FOREIGN MILITARY SALES PROGRAMS FOR CASH AND CREDIT. GOS APPEARED MORE INCLINED TO DEAL ON A CASH BASIS BUT DID NOT EXCLUDE THE PROSPECT OF OBTAINING SOME OF THIS EQUIPMENT THROUGH THE FOREIGN MILITARY SALES CREDIT PROGRAM. TEAM NOTED THAT ITS MANDATE WAS TO CONSIDER EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS IN COUNTER INSURGENCY FIELD.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 SINGAP 03216 01 OF 02 260600Z

REQUESTS FOR APC'S AND HOWITZERS APPEARED TO ADDRESS A LATER STAGE OF CONFLICT INVOLVING MAIN FORCE UNITS. NUMBER OF HOWITZERS AND APC'S REQUESTED SEEMED EXCESSIVE TO ANY EARLY STAGE OF INSURGENCY. GOS RESPONDED BY SAYING THEIR PLANNING HAD TO ADDRESS NOW THE POSSIBILITY THAT IN A WORST CASE SCENARIO SUCH A STAGE MIGHT DEVELOP IN 3 TO 5 YEARS.

5. COMMENT: IN CONCLUSION, ALTHOUGH THE TEAM'S MANDATE HAD SHIFTED CONSIDERABLY OWING TO LACK OF MALAYSIAN INTEREST IN COOPERATING WITH SINGAPORE IN COUNTER INSURGENCY, TEAM CAN STATE THAT THE ATMOSPHERICS OF THE DISCUSSIONS WITH GOS WERE VERY

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 03216 02 OF 02 260605Z

12

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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P 260452Z JUL 75

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3126

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SINGAPORE 3216

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POSITIVE. THE TALKS WERE CONDUCTED IN A SPIRIT OF CANDOR AND GOOD HUMOR. GOS WAS PARTICULARLY RESTRAINED ON THE SUBJECT OF FINANCING. WHILE GENERAL FMS CREDIT PROCEDURES WERE DISCUSSED, GOS DID NOT PRESS FOR ANY SPECIFIC ORDER OF MAGNITUDE OF CREDIT (THEY DID EXPRESS THE HOPE THAT "TERMS" WOULD BE REASONABLE). THE TEAM, HOWEVER, INDICATED DURING DISCUSSIONS THAT ONLY A MODEST AMOUNT OF FMS CREDIT WOULD BE AVAILABLE AT BEST. IN ESSENCE, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER GOS IS THINKING IN TERMS OF FMS CREDITS OR INTENDS TO ADHERE TO THE PAST POLICY OF PAYING CASH.

6. GOS IS OBVIOUSLY ANXIOUS TO PUT PROPOSED JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL IN BRUNEI INTO OPERATION WITHIN NEXT 18 MONTHS, AND APPEARED DISAPPOINTED THAT THE TEAM COULD NOT BE MORE OPTIMISTIC OVER PROSPECTS OF ACQUIRING USED C-130S WHICH WOULD BE NEEDED TO TRANSPORT PROSPECTIVE TRAINEES BETWEEN SINGAPORE AND BRUNEI. GOS OFFICIALS WERE ALSO DISAPPOINTED OVER SOME OF THE RATHER LONG LEAD TIMES WHICH WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR DELIVERY OF EQUIPMENT ON THEIR SHOPPING LIST.

7. SINGAPORE HAS NO INSURGENCY THREAT WITHIN ITS BORDERS AND ITS ENTIRE STRATEGY IS DESIGNED TO MEET A DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION IN MALAYSIA -- PREFERABLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MALAYSIANS. IMPLICIT IN GOS PRESENTATION WAS THE ASSUMPTION THAT IN A WORST-CASE SCENARIO WHERE THE SECURITY SITUATION HAD DETERIORATED DANGEROUSLY, GOS WOULD INTERVENE OVERTLY WITH OR WITHOUT MALAYSIAN CONSENT. GOS SHOPPING LIST, ESPECIALLY

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SINGAP 03216 02 OF 02 260605Z

HOWITZERS AND APCS, WAS OBVIOUSLY DESIGNED TO IMPLEMENT THIS STRATEGY. WE RECOGNIZE THIS POSES A FUNDAMENTAL POLICY PROBLEM AS TO WHAT ROLE THE U.S. IS GOING TO PLAY ON THE MALAYSIAN PENINSULA AS BOTH GOM AND GOS TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE INSURGENCY THREAT. CERTAINLY ANY EFFORT TO ASSIST WILL REQUIRE USG TO TREAD A FINE LINE BETWEEN GIVING GOM A VETO OVER GOS EQUIPMENT NEEDS AND PROVIDING GOS WITH SUCH A LARGE QUANTITY OF "OFFENSIVE" EQUIPMENT THAT GOM WOULD HAVE CAUSE FOR ALARM.

8. HOWEVER, WITHIN THESE BROAD PERIMETERS THE TEAM BELIEVES WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO DEVELOP A PACKAGE WHICH WILL NOT ONLY DEMONSTRATE OUR INTEREST IN HELPING THE GOS MEET ITS MINIMAL SECURITY REQUIREMENTS, BUT WILL ALSO PROVIDE A READILY AVAILABLE CAPABILITY TO ASSIST MALAYSIA IN THE EVENT THE GOM DECIDES TO COOPERATE MORE CLOSELY WITH THE GOS IN THE DEFENSE OF THE PENINSULA.
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